



# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
Washington, DC 20240

November 5, 2021

## **PERSONNEL BULLETIN No. 21-10**

**SUBJECT:** Direct Hire Authority for National Sea Grant College Program Amendments Act (Dean John A. Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship)

- 1. Purpose.** This Personnel Bulletin implements the Direct Hiring Authority (DHA) outlined in National Sea Grant College Program Amendments Act for the Department of the Interior (DOI). Bureaus must ensure compliance with human resources law and regulations not excluded by this law. On December 12, 2020, under the National Sea Grant College Program Amendments Act of 2020, Title 33 U.S.C. Chapter 22, Subchapter II, Section 1127(b), Congress granted direct-hire authority with respect to former recipients of the Dean John A. Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship.
- 2. Scope.** This Personnel Bulletin applies to all bureaus and equivalent offices of the Department.
- 3. Authority.** National Sea Grant College Program Amendments Act of 2020; Public Law 116-221; U.S.C. Title 33, Ch 22, Subchapter II, Section 1127(b)
- 4. Noncompetitive Hiring Status.** After successful completion of the 1-year, Dean John A. Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship, a former Knauss Fellow may be appointed to a career or career-conditional appointment as a Federal government employee. DOI may appoint a candidate directly without competitive examination or competing with career and career-conditional employees under internal merit staffing procedures to any position and grade level for which the candidate meets Office of Personnel Management (OPM) qualification standards. Direct-hire authority permits hiring without regard to Veteran's preference. Candidates applying under this authority will be considered with other noncompetitive candidates.
- 5. Policy.** DOI may appoint a former recipient of a Dean John A. Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship of the National Sea Grant College Program Act who:
  - earned a graduate or post-graduate degree in a field related to ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes resources or policy from an accredited institution of higher education;
  - successfully fulfilled the requirements of the fellowship within the executive or legislative branch of the Federal Government; and
  - meets OPM qualifications standards and any other qualification requirements for the position being appointed.

DOI must comply with Human Resources laws and regulations not excluded by the National Sea Grant College Program Amendments Act. The recruitment process will be conducted in accordance with Merit Systems Principles. At all times, HR Specialists, Management, and individuals acting as SMEs, will protect and comply with Merit System Principles and promote an effective Federal workforce by avoiding Prohibited Personnel Practices. All current and prospective Federal employees will be treated fairly in all aspects of employment.

- a. **Delegated Authority.** This direct hire authority is re-delegated from the Secretary of the Interior to Bureau Directors and equivalent office directors. The appointment of fellows to a competitive service position may be re-delegated to bureau Chiefs of Human Resources, through intervening levels of management or directly, without power of further re-delegation.
- b. **Bureau Responsibilities.** Recruitment will be conducted in accordance with Merit System Principles and promote an effective Federal workforce by avoiding Prohibited Personnel Practices. Consistent with federal law, Interior prohibits discrimination against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), pregnancy, age, disability, or protected EEO activity.

Bureaus must validate candidates have satisfactorily completed the Dean John A. Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship and meet eligibility for non-competitive hiring status, prior to appointment.

DHA will be exercised with respect to a specific qualified candidate not later than 2 years after the date that the candidate completed the fellowship. The 2-year timeframe cannot be extended.

- c. **Crediting Time Served.** A candidate may use time satisfactorily served in the fellowship program to count toward meeting qualifications requirements for federal employment. The candidate who uses time served to meet job qualifications requirements needs to clearly state the duties performed while working in the fellowship in their application(s) for Federal employment, so that they may be afforded credit at the appropriate grade. Although time served in a fellowship is creditable experience for qualification purposes, it is not creditable for purposes of computations for retirement, time in grade, leave or thrift saving plan. Time served does not count towards probationary period or career tenure.
- d. **Appointment.** Appointments may be made without regard to the provisions of subchapter I of chapter 33 of title 5, other than sections 3303 (Recommendations of Senators or Representatives) and 3328 (Selective Service Registration) of such title, a qualified candidate to a position for which the candidate meets Office of Personnel Management

(OPM) qualification standards.

Appointments are subject to DOI's Reemployment Priority and Special Selection Priority Lists, Career Transition Assistance Plan (CTAP), and Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan (ICTAP) provisions.

Appointees are subject to a probationary period consistent with other competitive service appointments.

- e. **Appointing Authority.** The following must be used when processing personnel actions under this direct-hire authority:

Nature of Action Code: 101 Career-Conditional Appointment  
Legal Authority Code: ZLM-P.L. 116-221 (Table 9-B of the Guide to Processing Personnel Actions)

- f. **Oversight and Review Requirements.** Bureau HR Offices are responsible for establishing written procedures and maintaining oversight of this Authority within their bureaus; ensuring appointments are made within the guidelines of this personnel bulletin and in compliance with human resources law and regulations; and appointments are appropriately documented and maintained. Appointment documentation must be retained for three (3) calendar years from the date of the appointment. Appointments are subject to review, under DOI's Human Capital Accountability and Program Evaluation.

Bureau policy leads may reach out to the DOI, Office of Human Capital at [DOI\\_Office\\_of\\_Human\\_Resources@ios.doi.gov](mailto:DOI_Office_of_Human_Resources@ios.doi.gov) with any questions.

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